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FM AIT TAIPEI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3034
INFO RUEHOO/CHINA POSTS COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL IMMEDIATE 0416
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE 0950
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON IMMEDIATE 0159
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI IMMEDIATE 0889
RUEHHM/AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY IMMEDIATE 0764
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHHJJAA/JICPAC HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RHHMUNA/USPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEHC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 000001

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/TC
STATE PASS USTR FOR STRATFORD, ALTBACH, AND O'CONNOR,
TREASURY FOR OASIA/WINSHIP AND JEWELL, NSC FOR LOI,
COMMERCE FOR 4431/ITA/MAC/AP/OPB/TAIWAN,
STATE PASS USDA FOR FAS/OSTA BLUM, BEAN, AND DAWSON;
FAS/OCRA RADLER, BURDETT, AND BEILLARD; FAS/OFSO SALLYARDS;
APHIS/IS AND VS; AND FSIS/HARRIES

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/31/2019
TAGS: [EAGR](#) [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [PREL](#) [TW](#)
SUBJECT: TAIWAN FOREIGN MINISTER ASKS FOR "MODEST" REACTION
TO PARLIAMENT CONSENSUS THAT VIOLATES BEEF PROTOCOL

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Classified By: Eric Madison, Acting AIT Director. Reasons: 1.4 b/d

11. (C) Summary: Foreign Minister Timothy Yang on December 31 told the AIT Acting Director that Taiwan hoped the United States reaction to the expected Legislative Yuan decision to ban imports of some U.S. beef products would be as "modest as possible." He urged the United States to work with President Ma Ying-jeou's administration to convince the Taiwan public of the safety of U.S. beef. To that end, Yang said Taiwan wanted to send a delegation of lawmakers, consumer group representatives and government officials to visit U.S. slaughterhouses to view how U.S. beef was processed. The Acting Director promised to relay the Foreign Minister's points to Washington but expressed skepticism about the utility of such a trip at this stage. End summary.

GOVERNMENT APPEARS RESIGNED TO ANTI-BEEF LEGISLATIVE ACTION

12. (C) Foreign Minister Yang called the Acting AIT Director to his office on December 31 to say he was not optimistic about reversing the consensus reached by lawmakers to contravene the new beef protocol by banning imports of U.S. beef offal, ground beef and other products deemed "risky." Yang urged the U.S. government to respect the decision of the Parliament, which is expected to pass the amendment on January 5, adding that it was not unusual in democracies for legislatures to overturn executive branch decisions from time to time. He noted that imports of U.S. bone-in beef, which resume under the protocol, would not be affected by the legislative action.

FM ASKS FOR "MODEST" REACTION

13. (C) Yang said he hoped the U.S. response to the Legislative Yuan's action would be "as modest as possible." He said he hoped other important bilateral issues would not be affected by the beef controversy. The U.S. government, he continued, should understand that President Ma Ying-jeou placed relations with the United States as a top priority and had been working hard to enhance ties, particularly as he sought to open up to China. The Foreign Minister urged Washington to do nothing in retaliation for beef that would weaken President Ma, who has been "very friendly" toward the United States. Indeed, the Foreign Minister asked that the United States take action to show goodwill toward the Ma administration, and suggested as possibilities moving forward on arms sales, the visa waiver program, an extradition agreement, a visit of a senior U.S. official to Taiwan, and enhancing economic ties through the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA).

PUBLIC RELATIONS EFFORTS SUGGESTED

14. (C) The Foreign Minister urged the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) to increase efforts to engage Taiwan people and lawmakers over the beef issue. He added that the Ma administration wanted to send a delegation of lawmakers, consumer groups and government officials in mid-January after the LY session ends to the U.S. to view for themselves how U.S. beef was processed. Such a trip would be an important "damage control" measure that would help blunt efforts by consumer groups to hold a referendum to reopen bilateral beef negotiations, he said.

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15. (C) The A/DIR noted that U.S trade officials already had discouraged a visit. He promised to doublecheck after Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials said the proposal had been modified. They said it would not stop in Washington nor be led by senior officials.

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TAIWAN ARGUES THAT AFFECT OF LY ACTION MINIMAL

16. (C) Once again, Yang and his colleagues argued that the Legislative Yuan's consensus draft amendments would affect less than 2 percent of the market expansion allowed under the beef protocol. The A/DIR and Agriculture Section Chief argued that the market for beef offal, ground beef and other products would likely be larger than estimated by Taiwan. In any event, they continued, the effect of the ban would have adverse consequences for U.S. beef interests in other markets beyond Taiwan.

COMMENT: INSPECTION TRIP MAY NOT BE BEST STEP

17. (C) The Taiwan government's desire to send a group of parliamentarians and consumer groups to visit U.S. slaughterhouses is not likely to do much to boost public confidence on Taiwan in U.S. beef. AIT interaction with lawmakers here suggests they would use the trip to grandstand or "uncover facts" that would justify their decision to limit access to U.S. beef. The Foreign Minister's plea for not only a "modest" response to the Legislative Yuan's action but for tangible signs of goodwill toward the Ma administration reflects in part the President's declining political standing, which could take another hit January 9 in three closely-watched legislative by-elections. The Ma administration here views improved relations with the United States as not only vital to its own political future, but for its ability to garner public support for its most important policy issue, the warming of ties with mainland China.

